

# **The Draft Local Transport Bill Consultation**

A report by the County Transportation Manager to the Highway Advisory Board on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2007

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## **Introduction**

1. This report outlines the provisions in the recently published draft Local Transport Bill and their implications for Kent. The Bill is intended to help tackle congestion and improve public transport. The consultation closes on 7 September.

## **Proposed Changes to Legislation**

2. Many of the measures proposed are aimed at major urban areas or modify provisions in the Transport Act 2000 that local authorities have not chosen or been able to use. The legislation is also updated to allow local authorities to take forward local road pricing schemes should they chose. The proposals most relevant to Kent are those that:
  - Provide new powers enabling local authorities in non-Metropolitan areas to set up Passenger Transport Authorities (PTAs).
  - make the implementation of Quality Contracts with public transport operators a realistic option in areas where it is in the public interest for local authorities to take greater control over bus services. This could provide a mechanism to secure the delivery of Smartlink in Ashford and future phases of Fastrack in Kent Thameside.
  - provide a new regime to deliver improved bus punctuality, holding local authorities as well as bus operators to account for their contribution to punctuality performance. Local Authorities are required to provide the Traffic Commissioner with information connected with the performance of their network management duties under the Traffic Management Act 2004 (TMA). Should Kent be found not to be identifying and addressing the causes of poor punctuality the Secretary of State may choose to issue an Intervention Notice under the TMA. The report to this meeting on priority vehicle lanes is particularly important in this context.
  - support for further development of the community transport sector than is currently permitted. Kent has a mix of such community transport schemes across the county and this should ease the development of new and expanded schemes and will provide us with an opportunity to review the provision of services to rural areas.

## **Improving Bus Services in Kent**

3. Whilst the elements of the draft legislation set out above have the potential to be of use to Kent, and these will feature in our response to the consultation, most of the proposals relate more to large metropolitan areas. Indeed Kent is already making good progress with delivering improvements to bus services through voluntary Quality Bus Partnerships with operators. In contrast to much of the country, Kent has managed to sustain a year on year 2% growth in bus patronage. In 2005/06 there were 45.7 million trips made in Kent and in 2006/07 there were 47.1 million trips. Members will be aware of Fastrack in Kent Thameside where passenger numbers are 50% over projections and include 19% of people who would have previously used their car. There are similar examples in Thanet and Canterbury. This will form the basis of our response to Government. In the context of the developing Kent Thameside and Ashford areas, consideration will be given to the potential benefits of applying for PTA status in order to access additional Government funding.

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### **Recommendation**

4. Given the timing of the consultation, where responses are being asked for by 7 September, Members are asked to agree for a response along the lines of that set out above, to be produced and sent to the DfT under delegated powers.

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**Background Documents** – *placed in the Members Library*  
*Strengthening local delivery: The draft Local Transport Bill*